

FINAL

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

City of Hollister General Plan (March 2005 Public Review Draft)

SCH # 2004081147

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City of Hollister Draft General Plan (March 2005 Public Review Draft) Final Environmental Impact Report

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Section 1

Introduction

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1. Introduction

1.1

Purpose of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

This Final Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) describes the potential environmental effects that could result from implementation of the proposed City of Hollister General Plan (March 2005 Public Review Draft), which provides policy guidelines for the Hollister Planning Area to direct growth and development to the year 2023.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) charges public agencies with the responsibility of avoiding or minimizing environmental damage where feasible. As part of this responsibility, public agencies are required to balance various public objectives, including economic, environmental, and social issues. As provided by CEQA, an EIR is an informational document intended for review by members of the public and concerned public agencies. For this project, the City of Hollister is the Lead Agency and will consider certification of the EIR and adoption of the Draft General Plan.

An EIR is integral to the process of informing decision-makers and the general public what significant effects might result from a proposed project. In addition, the document identifies possible means of minimizing any significant effects and presents reasonable alternatives to the project. In making its decision about the project, the lead agency, in this case the City of Hollister, must consider the information in this EIR along with any other available information.

The City has prepared this EIR in close coordination with the preparation of the Draft General Plan. This combined approach is intended to ensure three objectives: (1) Overall planning coordination and consistency; (2) coordination in the environmental review process for the plan and EIR; and (3) self-mitigation in the City's plans by identifying policies and program actions which can mitigate potential impacts. The policies and programs contained in the Draft General Plan are intended to reduce potential environmental impacts.

The CEQA Guidelines recognize the interactive nature of the planning process and the fact that some measures intended to mitigate the impacts of proposed projects may be incorporated into the project proposal. For many of the areas of concern, policies and implementation programs have been integrated into the Draft General Plan to enhance and protect the environment. This approach helps ensure consideration of environmental protection in the City's Planning Area.

The purpose of this EIR is: (1) to identify the potential significant effects of the proposed project on the environment and to indicate the manner in which those significant effects can be avoided or mitigated to a less-than significant level; (2) to identify any significant irreversible changes to the environment that cannot be mitigated; and (3) to identify reasonable alternatives to the proposed project.

1.2

Scope of the Environmental Impact Report

CEQA distinguishes between “Project EIR” and “Program EIR,” defining a Program EIR as one that addresses a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and can be related in the following ways:

- (1) Geographically;
- (2) As logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions;
- (3) In connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or,
- (4) As individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects that can be mitigated in similar ways.

As with all general plans, the City of Hollister General Plan provides a framework for future decisions and actions that affect the development of its planning area. It is a policy document rather than a direct proposal for a specific action. Consistent with its policy function, it contains a full set of action programs that should be implemented to achieve its goals. It does not, however, describe these actions in sufficient detail that the specific impacts of each can be fully evaluated in this EIR.

This EIR evaluates policies and programs in the City of Hollister General Plan (March 2005 Public Review Draft) that would lead to alterations in the physical environment. The evaluation includes changes in population, employment and land use patterns that would occur in Hollister as the General Plan is implemented. The Draft General Plan assumes a projected amount of growth, and is not a build out plan. Build out assumes construction of the maximum amount of development allowed under the Land Use Element. By using projected growth, the City recognizes that vacant land remains for development, and that redevelopment of an existing building is more difficult to achieve and thus occurs at a slower pace than developing vacant land, and that incremental growth through redevelopment is small. The growth projections should be viewed on a citywide basis.

Since this EIR is a Program EIR, and thereby evaluates the environmental impacts of the Draft General Plan on a general level rather than a project-specific level, its analysis is considered the first tier of environmental review. Tiering, another CEQA concept, envisions agency decision-making as focusing first on the general impacts of large land areas and then focusing subsequent environmental review on project-or site-specific issues.

This EIR will create the foundation on which future, project-specific CEQA documents can build upon. As a planning tool, the Draft General Plan identifies general policies for the City to follow. Further studies are identified in the Draft General Plan that will supplement the data and analysis available at this point in time. As tiering is defined, future site-specific projects might be able to use the impact conclusions drawn in this EIR without needing a new EIR. To qualify a project must:

- (1) Be consistent with the General Plan (projects requiring general plan amendments or rezoning cannot use tiering);

- (2) Be consistent with applicable local land use plans and zoning for the area in which the future project is located; and,
- (3) Not trigger the need for a subsequent EIR or supplement to an EIR.

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this EIR:

- (1) Assesses the expected impacts of the ultimate environmental changes resulting from the implementation of the policies in the Draft General Plan;
- (2) Identifies mitigation measures that could avoid or minimize potentially significant environmental impacts; and,
- (3) Evaluates alternatives to the proposed project.

If an EIR determines that there will be significant impacts as the result of a project, agencies with authority over the project must take one or more of the following actions:

- (1) Require changes to the project that would avoid or substantially reduce significant impacts;
- (2) Approve one of the project alternatives instead of the project; and/or,
- (3) Adopt a written statement of overriding considerations that finds that specific economic, social, or other considerations make the mitigation measures or project alternative(s) contained in the EIR infeasible.

The EIR is a factual, objective, public-disclosure document that takes no position on the merits of the project, but rather provides information on which decisions about the project can be based. The EIR has been prepared according to the professional standards and practices of the EIR consultants' individual disciplines and in conformance with the legal requirements and informational expectations of CEQA and the State and local guidelines in place to implement it. EIR authors are listed in Section 7 under "Report Preparers."

An initial study was not undertaken because it was determined under the provisions of Section 15063 of the CEQA Guidelines that an EIR is clearly required for the project. This EIR covers the following subject areas:

Aesthetics
Biological Resources
Hazards & Hazardous Materials
Public Services
Utilities/Service Systems
Agriculture Resources
Cultural Resources
Hydrology/Water Quality
Noise
Recreation
Air Quality
Geology/Soils
Land Use/Planning
Population/Housing
Transportation/Traffic
Mandatory Findings of Significance

This EIR has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act, including the CEQA Statutes (Public Resources Code §§ 21000-21178.1), State CEQA Guidelines, and relevant court decisions.

1.3

Information Used to Prepare the EIR

The State CEQA Guidelines permit any person to submit information to assist in the preparation of an EIR, but require independent review of the information to ensure that it accurately reflects the lead agency's judgment about the environmental impacts of the project. The following sources, along with others referenced in Section VII.3, Bibliography were relied upon in the preparation of this EIR:

City of Hollister Draft General Plan Background Materials

The City of Hollister hosted a significant community process preparing the Draft General Plan. As part of the process, background materials were prepared with the assistance of independent consultants.

City of Hollister Draft General Plan

This is the document analyzed in this EIR. See Chapter III, Project Description for a complete description of this document.

City of Hollister General Plan 1995 Final Environmental Impact Report

This document analyzes the potential impacts of the General Plan 1995. It includes the Draft EIR, and the Draft EIR addendum.

City of Hollister General Plan (1995)

This is the existing General Plan for the City of Hollister. This document is currently used by the City Staff to guide development within the City.

Hollister Area Lessalt Water Treatment Plant Environmental Documents (June 2000).

This is a Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study for a three million gallon per day membrane filtration facility to treat San Felipe surface water for delivery to municipal and industrial users.

Hollister Area Urban Water Management Plan 2000 (July, 1999). This Final Report was prepared for the Sunnyslope County Water District, the City of Hollister, and the San Benito County Water District to comply with State and Federal mandates. It addresses water supply and demand in the Hollister area, Water Conservation programs, Water Shortage Contingency Plans, and Water Recycling.

Groundwater Management Plan Update for the San Benito County Portion of the Gilroy-Hollister Groundwater Basin (Spring, 2004). The Revised Administrative Final Report and Final Program EIR were prepared for the Water Resources Association of San Benito County. The Groundwater Management Plan Update (GWMP Update) addresses surface and groundwater management as well as wastewater discharges and use of reclaimed water supplies.

San Benito County Regional Recycled Water Project - Feasibility Study Report (May, 2004). This feasibility study was prepared for the San Benito County Water District using grant funding from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). The purpose of the study was to identify a cost effective water recycling project that would meet the needs of the region.

Using CALSIM II for Long-Term Planning (October, 2003). This Technical Memorandum (TM) was prepared for the San Benito County Water District in order to better understand and utilize the California Simulation Model II (CALSIM II), the planning model for the operations of the Central Valley Project (CVP) and the State Water Project. The TM includes a discussion of water sources for the San Benito County Water District (ground, surface and CVP waters), projected demand, and the future outlook for the District's supply of CVP water.

City of Hollister Draft Storm Water Management Plan (August, 2003). The Draft Storm Water Management Plan (Draft SWMP) was prepared in order to comply with State and Federal regulations for Small Municipal Separate Stormwater Systems. The Draft SWMP describes the two drainage basins impacted by Hollister's stormwater runoff and the existing stormwater collection system. Also included in the Draft SWMP are proposals to protect water resources through public education, public participation, and detection and elimination of illicit municipal discharge.

Liquefaction Susceptibility of the Hollister Area, San Benito County, California (February, 1998). This is a technical report prepared by the U.S. Geological Survey that evaluates risk associated with liquefaction in the Hollister Planning Area during an earthquake. Reference maps are also included that are used in assessing specific project impacts.

Resolution of the City Council of the City of Hollister Authorizing and Directing the Mayor to Execute a Memorandum of Understanding Between the City of Hollister, San Benito County, and San Benito County Water District for the Hollister Urban Area Water and Wastewater Master Plan (December, 2004). The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes a process and standards for the parties to undertake the cooperative and mutually beneficial development of a comprehensive Master Plan for water supply and wastewater treatment and disposal for the Hollister Urban Area.

1.4

Public Review and Comment

Copies of the Draft General Plan and this EIR are available through the City of Hollister Development Services Department, the Hollister Public Library, and online on the City's website. The City of Hollister will also circulate the document to public agencies, relevant organizations, and interested individuals.

Comments on the DEIR were submitted in writing or orally at a public hearing held by the City of Hollister on August 25, 2005. Comments were intended to focus on the adequacy and completeness of the EIR and the environmental consequences of project implementation. In this case, "adequacy" is defined as the EIR's thoroughness in addressing

significant environmental effects, identifying mitigation measures for those impacts, and supplying enough information for public officials to make decisions about the merits of the project. In order to keep the documents succinct and useful as decision-making tools, the State CEQA Guidelines charge that EIRs focus on a project's significant impacts and not address every imaginable less-than-significant effect.

The 45-day public review period began on August 8, 2005 and ended on September 21, 2005. Comments on the EIR were sent or delivered to:

City of Hollister Development Services Department
375 Fifth Street, Hollister, CA 95023
Attention: Susan Heiser

Comments on the EIR could also be sent via fax to (831) 636-4364, or by e-mail to planning@hollister.ca.gov. After the close of the public review period, this Final EIR was prepared. It contains all the comments received by the City during the public review period and responses to those comments. No action can be taken on the Draft General Plan until the Final EIR is certified; however, City acceptance of the FEIR upon certification does not signal or require approval of the project studied.

This EIR has been prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). A Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the EIR was distributed to interested agencies and individuals. Responses to the comments received on the NOP are contained in Appendix A. Impacts of the Plan have been evaluated against existing conditions and potential development under the existing Hollister General Plan adopted in 1995. CEQA Guidelines provide that “the discussion of mitigation measures shall distinguish between measures that are proposed by project proponents to be included in the project and other measures which are not included, but could be reasonably expected to reduce adverse impacts.” By their nature, the policies and programs included in the Draft General Plan are intended to mitigate potential impacts. The primary policies and programs that mitigate significant impacts are identified in the EIR.

Notice of Preparation

Publication of a Notice of Preparation (NOP) is required by CEQA once an Initial Study has determined that an Environmental Impact Report will be prepared for a project. After the NOP is published and distributed, there is a 30-day review period for public agencies and individuals to express their concerns about information to be contained in the EIR.

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR on the City of Hollister Draft General Plan was sent out for a 30-day review period to public agencies and the general public on March 31, 2004. All written comments received on the March 31, 2004 NOP have been included in the Final EIR. In addition, a public scoping session on issues to be addressed in the EIR was noticed in the March 31, 2004 NOP and then conducted on April 9, 2004. A summary of the April 9, 2004 EIR Scoping Session is also included in the Final EIR in Appendix A.

The NOP was also re-published on August 20, 2004 and sent to the State Clearinghouse and the General Plan mailing list. The re-published NOP review period ended on September 22, 2004. The State Government Code Section 21080.4 provides that the lead agency must convene a scoping meeting upon the request of any responsible agency or

trustee agency to discuss environmental issues and concerns about the proposed project so that these issues can be evaluated in the EIR. Since a public Scoping Session was conducted on April 9, 2004 and those comments have been included in the Final EIR, no additional public scoping session was scheduled.

Notice of Completion

A Notice of Completion of the Final EIR (DEIR) will be distributed to concerned public agencies and to individuals potentially interested in the Plan.

Certification of the Final Environmental Impact Report

This Final EIR (FEIR) was prepared following the end of the public comment period on the DEIR. The FEIR incorporates the DEIR, comments on the DEIR, responses to the comments, and changes to the DEIR. The City of Hollister Planning Commission will review the FEIR for completeness and accuracy, and will recommend to the City Council that the FEIR be certified as complete.

The City of Hollister City Council may hold a public hearing to consider the FEIR. When the City Council is satisfied that the report is complete and accurate, it will certify the document. The FEIR must be certified before the updated General Plan can be adopted. After the City Council has certified the FEIR and taken action on the General Plan, a Notice of Determination will be filed with the State Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and the San Mateo County Clerk.

1.5

Agencies Expected to Use the EIR

The City of Hollister, in addition to preparing its own General Plan, is also affected by plans made for the area by federal, State, regional, and other local agencies. It is important for the success of any plan that it be coordinated with other organizations making plans for the same area. This is especially true in Hollister where several important services, such as water supply and regional transportation, are the primary responsibility of other agencies. These agencies include the following:

Federal Agencies

- National Marine Fisheries Service
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. General Services Administration

State Agencies

- California Air Resources Board
- California Department of Conservation
- California Department of Fish and Game
- California Department of Health

- California Department of Housing and Community Development
- California Department of Parks and Recreation
- California Department of Parks and Recreation, Office of Historic Preservation
- California Department of Transportation
- California Energy Commission
- California Governor's Office of Planning and Research
- California Native American Heritage Commission
- California State Lands Commission
- California Transportation Commission
- California Water Resources Control Board
- Office of Noise Control

Local and Regional Agencies

- Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments
- Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District
- Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control
- City of Hollister
- San Benito County Water District
- County of San Benito
- San Benito County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)
- Hollister City School District
- San Benito County High School District
- Gavilan College
- San Benito County Council of Governments
- San Benito County Local Transportation Authority
- Sunnyslope Water District

1.6

Report Organization and Vocabulary

The EIR is organized into the following sections.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Provides an overview of the purpose of the EIR, basis for the analysis contained in the EIR, use of the EIR in the planning and decision-making process, and the process to prepare the EIR.

Chapter 2 – Summary

Outlines the proposed project and provides, in table format, a listing of the impacts, mitigation, and level of significance after mitigation.

Chapter 3 – Project Description

Describes the project in greater detail, provides an overview of the Draft General Plan process and objectives, and discusses the Draft General Plan's relationship to other area and regional plans.

Chapter 4 – Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures

Provides the environmental analysis for each of the 11 impact areas, listing the setting and relevant Draft General Plan policies, environmental impacts, levels of significance, mitigation measures, and level of significance after mitigation.

Chapter 5 – Impact Overview

Beyond the impact discussion in Chapter IV, this section lists impacts of no significance, significant unavoidable impacts, significant irreversible environmental changes, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts.

Chapter 6 – Project Alternatives

Discusses the project alternatives and their associated environmental impacts. This chapter also identifies the environmentally superior alternative.

Chapter 7 – Report Preparation

Lists report preparers, people and organizations consulted, and bibliography.

Appendices

Includes comments and responses to the Notice of Preparation (NOP) and a listing of Draft General Plan policies and programs referenced as mitigation measures in the EIR.

The Draft City of Hollister General Plan includes goals, policies, implementing programs and background information incorporated herein, pursuant to Section 15166 of the CEQA Guidelines ("EIR as Part of a General Plan"), and made a part of this EIR. In addition, this EIR relies heavily on other documents. These documents are also incorporated herein pursuant to Section 15150 of the CEQA Guidelines ("Incorporation by Reference"), and made a part of this EIR.

Vocabulary

The following terms are used in this EIR as prescribed in the CEQA Guidelines.

Significance Criteria

Criteria establish the basis upon which an impact is determined significant and, therefore, requires some type of mitigation measure to reduce the impact. These criteria are typically based on the description in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, which generally describes circumstances when impacts would be considered significant. Where possible, the criteria are based on state, regional or local standards.

Significant Impact

A significant impact as defined for that impact area that cannot be mitigated to a less-than-significant level under the policies, programs and other proposals of the Draft General Plan, but it can be reduced to a less-than-significant level with additional mitigation proposed in the EIR.

Significant Unavoidable Impact

A significant impact as defined for that impact area that cannot be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. These include impacts that could be partly mitigated but could not be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

Cumulative Impact/Cumulatively Significant

Effects that, when considered with related effects, have a significant impact.

Less-than-Significant Impact

A change or effect directly or indirectly attributable to the Draft General Plan which, with implementation of the policies, programs and other proposals contained in the Draft General Plan, will result in no impact or in potential impacts that can be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure

Mitigation measures are measures that are intended to eliminate, reduce, or compensate for impacts identified as significant or potentially significant. This EIR identifies mitigation measures proposed in the Draft General Plan and any additional mitigation measures that may reduce potential impacts. Impacts identified in the EIR as being less-than significant would not require mitigation.

Section 2

Summary

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2. Summary

This section summarizes the findings of the EIR. It highlights the project's effects, identifies the alternatives studied, and presents the impact overview discussions required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

This EIR considers development through to the year 2023 in Hollister and assesses the effects of implementing the project alone and combined with other cumulative development expected in the vicinity. Section 2.2 summarizes the environmental impacts identified in Chapter 4 (Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures) where the impacts are discussed in detail. Topical sections in Chapter 4 list the thresholds and criteria used to determine significance for the respective environmental subject.

2.1

Project Summary

The project is a comprehensive update of the City's current General Plan. The updated General Plan provides goals, policies and implementation measures intended to guide development within the Hollister Planning Area through the year 2023. The City of Hollister's current General Plan was adopted in 1995. In 2002 the City determined that a comprehensive update of the General Plan was needed to address changed conditions since adoption of the 1995 General Plan to maintain a plan current in policy, program implementation, and budget direction.

The Draft General Plan establishes land use designations within the Hollister Planning Area, and will provide the basis for subsequent revisions in the current zoning ordinance. The preferred land use concept was developed from community input gathered from community workshops and Steering Committee meetings. It recommends the concentration of medium and high-density residential development along major boulevards without developing the outskirts of the City. Gateway and neighborhood retail districts are designated at key points in the City, forming linear corridors of activity.

The Draft General Plan addresses the seven required elements of State law (land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise and safety). A more detailed project description and background on the Draft General Plan ("The Project") is contained in Chapter 3, Project Description.

2.2

Summary of Draft General Plan Impacts and Mitigation Measures

- "S" **Significant Impact** - A significant impact, as defined for that impact area, cannot be mitigated to a less-than-significant level under the policies, programs and other proposals of the Draft General Plan, but it can be reduced to a less-than-significant level with additional mitigation proposed in the EIR.
- "SU" **Significant Unavoidable Impact** - A significant unavoidable impact, as defined for that impact area, cannot be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. This would include impacts that can be partly mitigated but cannot be reduced to a less-than-significant level.
- "LTS" **Less-than-Significant Impact** - A less-than-significant impact is a change or effect directly or indirectly attributable to the Draft General Plan which, with implementation of the policies, programs and other proposals contained in the Draft General Plan, will result in no impact or in potential impacts that would be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR	Significance After Mitigation
Land Use, Population, Employment, and Housing			
4.1-1 Conflict with Applicable Land Use or Other Plans Development under the Draft General Plan would conflict in a minor way with AMBAG forecasts for housing and population through the year 2023.	S	Mitigation Measure 4.1-1-1 (new program) Initiate a process to amend the AMBAG Forecasts. Initiate a process to amend the 2004 AMBAG Population, Housing Unit and Employment Forecasts for San Benito County to make them consistent with the City of Hollister Draft General Plan and Regional Housing Needs Determinations.	LTS
4.1-2 Incompatible Land Uses and Changes to Neighborhood Character Development consistent with the Draft General Plan would result in changes in land use type, density, scale and character in the more central area of the City, downtown and	LTS	None required.	LTS

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR	Significance After Mitigation
surrounding neighborhoods. . Implementation of mitigation measures contained in the policies and programs in the Draft General Plan would reduce potential conflicts between new and existing uses, including design and traffic conflicts, and would reduce potential impacts to a less-than-significant level.			
<i>4.1-3 Growth and Concentration of Population</i> Development consistent with the Draft General Plan would induce substantial growth and concentration of the City's population. This would be a significant unavoidable impact.	SU	None.	SU
<i>4.1-4 Disruption of an Established Community</i> Cumulative development under the Draft General Plan would not result in the disruption of an established community.	LTS	None required.	LTS
<i>4.1-5 Employment Growth Rate</i> Development under the Draft General Plan would result in an expected increase in employment of 8,970 jobs over 2000 U.S. Census figures.	SU	None.	SU
<i>4.1-6 Jobs-to-Housing Ratio</i> Development under the Draft General Plan would result in about the same jobs to housing ratio as currently exists.	LTS	None required.	LTS
Transportation and Circulation			
<i>4.2-1 Increases in Traffic Volumes</i> Increases in traffic volumes will result in unacceptable levels of service at two intersections -- San Benito Street and Fourth Street; and Airline Highway (SR 25) and Sunnyslope Road.	SU	None.	SU

<i>Impact</i>	<i>Significance Before Mitigation</i>	<i>Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR</i>	<i>Significance After Mitigation</i>
<i>4.2-2 Roadway Capacity Deficiencies</i> Roadway capacity deficiencies were identified in several areas. These deficiencies are directly related to the future land use designations shown on the updated General Plan Map. The deficiencies can be grouped into several categories of roadway capacity needs. These include: (a) regional commuting; (b) Northwest Hollister circulation needs; (c) Southeast Hollister circulation needs; and, (d) additional roadway capacity serving the Industrial Park.	SU	None.	SU

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR	Significance After Mitigation
Air Quality			
4.3-1 Consistency with Clean Air Plan The Draft General Plan is consistent with the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District clean air plan. Population projections do not significantly exceed AMBAG projections, and VMT should not increase faster than population.	LTS	None required. (See also Mitigation Measure 4.1-1-1)	LTS
4.3-2 Consistency with Clean Air Plan Transportation Control Measures The Draft General Plan policies would support regional transportation control measures that are to be implemented by cities.	LTS	None required.	LTS
4.3-3 Odor/Toxics Buffer Zones The Draft General Plan policies and land use maps would provide adequate buffer zones around existing and proposed land uses that could emit odor and toxic contaminants. In addition, measures would be included to control dust from construction and other activities.	LTS	None required.	LTS
Noise			
4.4-1 Increased Traffic Noise Existing noise sensitive land uses would be exposed to minor increases in noise levels from traffic. In addition, roadway improvement projects have the potential to generate noise impacts due to increased traffic noise. However, with implementation of mitigation measures contained in the Draft General Plan to reduce noise levels this would be a less-than-significant impact.	LTS	None required.	LTS

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR	Significance After Mitigation
4.4-2 Rail and Airport Noise Existing noise sensitive land uses would not be exposed to increased noise levels from the Hollister Airport or from rail operations.	LTS	None required.	LTS
4.4-3 Stationary Noise Sources and Construction Noise Existing noise sensitive land use would be exposed to increased noise levels from stationary noise sources, and noise from construction activities would also occur. Existing City regulations and the policies and programs contained in the Draft General Plan can reduce potential noise impacts to a less-than-significant level.	LTS	None required.	LTS
Public Services and Utilities			
4.5-1 Fire Protection, Emergency Services and Wildland Fires Development consistent with the Draft General Plan would increase the potential for wildland and urban interface problems, and would also increase the demand for fire protection and emergency services. The implementation of policies and programs contained in the Draft General Plan and the maintenance of adequate staffing levels consistent with population and jobs growth can reduce these potential impacts to a less-than-significant level.	LTS	None required.	LTS
4.5-2 Release of Hazardous Materials Activities associated with industrial and manufacturing businesses, and the increase in residences, could cause the potential for release of hazardous materials. Existing City regulations and the policies and programs proposed in the Draft General Plan can reduce potential impacts to a less-than-significant	LTS	None required.	LTS

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR	Significance After Mitigation
level.			
<p>4.5-3 Police Services</p> <p>Development consistent with the Draft General Plan would generate demand for additional police services. The implementation of policies and programs contained in the Draft General Plan and the maintenance of adequate staffing levels consistent with population and jobs growth can reduce these potential impacts to a less-than-significant level.</p>	LTS	None required.	LTS
<p>4.5-4 Schools</p> <p>Development consistent with the Draft General Plan would generate demand for school facilities and personnel. The implementation of policies and programs contained in the Draft General Plan to coordinate with the various school districts as development occurs and the maintenance of school facilities and staffing levels consistent with population growth can reduce these potential impacts to a less-than-significant level.</p>	LTS	None required.	LTS

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR	Significance After Mitigation
<p><i>4.5-5 Library Services</i></p> <p>Development consistent with the Draft General Plan would increase the demand for library services. The implementation of policies and programs contained in the Draft General Plan can reduce these potential impacts to a less-than-significant level.</p>	LTS	None required.	LTS
<p><i>4.5-6 Parks and Recreation Facilities</i></p> <p>Development consistent with the Draft General Plan would generate demand for park and recreation facilities, and recreation services. The implementation of the Park Facility Master Plan, policies and programs contained in the Draft General Plan, and the maintenance of adequate staffing levels consistent with population growth can reduce these potential impacts to a less-than-significant level.</p>	LTS	None required.	LTS
<p><i>4.5-7 Landfill Capacity</i></p> <p>Development consistent with the Draft General Plan 2020 will result in increased solid waste generation. Depending on the accuracy of the population projections and business growth for both the City of Hollister and County of San Benito, there is expected to be sufficient landfill capacity until approximately 2016. This could be a potentially significant impact unless plans are made for future countywide refuse disposal needs. The implementation of policies and programs contained in the Draft General Plan, including the addition of the mitigation proposed in this EIR – calling for coordination with San Benito County to reduce long-term impacts on landfill capacity by assuring appropriate planning for and</p>	S	<p>Mitigation Measure 4.5-7-1 (<i>new policy</i>)</p> <p>Coordination with San Benito County on Solid Waste Management. Coordinate with the County of San Benito in addressing solid waste management needs consistent with the Hollister General Plan.</p> <p>Mitigation Measure 4.5-7-2 (<i>new program</i>)</p> <p>Coordinate with San Benito County on landfill capacity needs. Coordinate with San Benito County and San Benito County Integrated Waste Management to expand landfill capacity beyond the currently expected life of the John Smith Road Landfill.</p>	LTS

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR	Significance After Mitigation
construction of adequate solid waste facilities – can reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.			
4.5-14 Electricity, Natural Gas, and Gasoline Demand Development consistent with the Draft General Plan would not increase the demand for electricity or gas beyond the capacity of these service providers.	LTS	None required.	LTS
Cultural Resources			
4.6-1 Impacts on Archaeological and Prehistoric Resources Development consistent with the Draft General Plan has the potential to result in the disturbance of subsurface archaeological and prehistoric resources. However, the Draft General Plan would not change the requirements of the City's existing development review process, strengthens City policies, and contains new programs to protect these resources.	LTS	None required.	LTS
4.6-2 Impacts on Historic or Cultural Resources Development consistent with the Draft General Plan would not result in the disturbance of historic or cultural resources. City policies would be in-place to assure that that potential impacts are addressed.	LTS	None required.	LTS
Visual Quality			
4.7-1 Scenic Resources Development consistent with the Draft General Plan could impact scenic vistas and visual natural resources within the Planning Area. However, the development review processes already in place in the City, combined with new policies outlined in the Draft General	LTS	None required.	LTS

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR	Significance After Mitigation
Plan would limit the impact.			
<p>4.7-2 Conflicts with Adjoining Development</p> <p>Development consistent with the Draft General Plan could potentially conflict with adjoining development relative to height within the <i>Planning Area</i>. However, the design and development review processes already in place in the City, combined with the new design guidelines outlined in the Draft General Plan would limit the impact of potential conflicts.</p>	LTS	None required.	LTS
<p>4.7-3 Visual Setting and Character of the City</p> <p>Development consistent with the updated General Plan could alter or degrade the visual setting or character of the city. However, the design and development review processes already in place in the city, combined with numerous policies in the Draft General Plan, would limit the impact of potential impacts to the visual setting and character of the city to a less-than-significant level.</p>	LTS	None required.	LTS
<p>4.7-4 Nighttime Lighting and Glare</p> <p>Development consistent with the Draft General Plan could create new sources of light or glare and increase nighttime lighting in the area. This would be a significant impact. Inclusion of a new program, as proposed in this EIR, to address nighttime lighting and glare in new development would reduce this significant impact to a less-than-significant level.</p>	S	<p><i>Mitigation Measure 4.7-4-1 (new program)</i></p> <p>Develop guidelines for the preparation of lighting plans. In order to minimize light trespass and greater overall light levels in the city, new development and projects making significant parking lot improvements or proposing new lighting shall be required to prepare a lighting plan for review by City planning staff. Require a design guidelines to include the following provisions for lighting plans:</p> <p>a. All light sources should be fully shielded from off-site view.</p>	LTS

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR	Significance After Mitigation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. All lights to be downcast except where it can be proved to not adversely affect other parcels. c. Escape of light to the atmosphere should be minimized. d. Low intensity, indirect light sources should be encouraged, except where other types of lighting is warranted for public safety reasons. e. On-demand lighting systems should be encouraged. f. Mercury, metal halide, and similar intense and bright lights should not be permitted except where their need is specifically approved and their source of light is restricted. 	
Biological Resources			
4.8-1 Special-Status Plant and Animal Species New development under the Draft General Plan could affect a number of federal or state listed plant and animal species directly through incidental take or indirectly through habitat destruction unless the policies and programs in the Draft General Plan are followed. This would be a potentially significant impact that can be reduced to a less-than-significant level with the new General Plan.	LTS	None required.	LTS
4.8-2 Sensitive Natural Communities A number of sensitive natural communities could be affected by development under the Draft General Plan either directly in undeveloped areas designated for development or indirectly by intensifying the land use	LTS	None required.	LTS

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR	Significance After Mitigation
adjacent to current undeveloped lands. Policies and programs in the Draft General Plan call for the protection and avoidance of sensitive habitat. While this could be a potentially significant impact, it would be reduced to a less-than-significant level with the new General Plan.			
4.8-3 Los of Wetlands Implementation of the Draft General Plan could affect a number of wetlands including marshes, streams, and various other wetlands that support a number of important plant and animal species. With implementation of the policies and programs in the Draft General Plan this would be a less-than-significant impact.	LTS	None required.	LTS
4.8-4 Habitat for Native Wildlife Development on vacant parcels would occur at a higher intensity use of the land use and development under the Draft General Plan may result in a loss of habitat for native wildlife if development occurs on currently available wildlife habitat. In the Planning Area, those areas that are proposed for development that provide habitat for wildlife occur primarily around the perimeter of or are contiguous with the areas that are currently developed. With implementation of the policies and programs in the Draft General Plan this would be a less-than-significant impact.	LTS	None required.	LTS
Geology, Soils, and Seismicity			
4.9-1 Seismic Ground Shaking Seismic hazards in the Hollister Planning Area will expose people and structures to	SU	None.	SU

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR	Significance After Mitigation
potential, substantial adverse seismic effects, including the potential risk of loss, injury, or death involving strong seismic ground shaking. A similar potential for seismically-induced damage affects most areas located near major active faults within California. The Draft General (Health and Safety) contains numerous policies and programs to reduce these potential impacts to what is defined as an "acceptable level of risk," as determined by the City, even if the impacts of the Draft General Plan should be considered significant and unavoidable.			
4.9-2 Seismic Related Ground Failure Seismic hazards in the Hollister Planning Area will expose people and structures to potential substantial adverse seismic effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death from seismic-related ground failures of liquefaction, lateral spreading, lurching, differential settlement, and flow failures. The Draft General (Health and Safety) contains numerous policies and programs to reduce these potential impacts to what is defined as an "acceptable level of risk," as determined by the City, even if the impacts of the Draft General Plan should be considered significant and unavoidable.	SU	None.	SU
4.9-6 Expansive Soils Geotechnical review required under City regulations and the Draft General Plan would prevent exposure of property improvements to potential adverse effects from expansive soils.	LTS	None required.	LTS
Hydrology, Drainage and Flood Hazards, Wastewater Treatment, Water Quality, and Water Supply			

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR	Significance After Mitigation
<p>4.10-1 Wastewater Treatment Capacity</p> <p>The planned treatment capacity of the City of Hollister Wastewater Treatment Plant will be consistent with the development projections under the Draft General Plan. Implementation of Draft General Plan policies and programs related to water and wastewater, with the additional mitigation measure 10.1-1-1 proposed in this EIR requiring master planning for wastewater and water supplies in coordination with the San Benito County Water District and San Benito, would result in a less-than-significant impact.</p>	S	<p><i>Mitigation Measure 4.10-1-1 (modifications to Program CSF.F)</i></p> <p>Coordinate with the San Benito County Water District, San Benito County and the Sunnyslope County Water District in water and wastewater system expansion needs. As a follow-up to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Hollister, San Benito County, and San Benito County Water District, the City will work with the San Benito County Water District and San Benito County to develop and implement plans for meeting the water needs of the City of Hollister consistent with the General Plan. Issues to be addressed include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Implementation of the Groundwater Management Plan, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Purchasing of additional water supplies. b. Percolation of the San Felipe Project water into the underlying aquifers. c. Obtaining access to water from the San Felipe Project. d. Monitoring groundwater levels and the quantities of water recharged to and extracted from the underlying sub-basins. e. Sharing water resources data between the agencies to allow for responsible decisions regarding water supply development and land use planning. f. Developing policies regarding the provision of service to community water systems and small local water systems. (2) Develop and implement the Hollister Urban Water and Wastewater Master Plan, including: 	LTS

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR	Significance After Mitigation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Purchasing of additional water supplies. b. Percolation of the San Felipe Project water into the underlying aquifers. c. Obtaining access to water from the San Felipe Project. d. Monitoring groundwater levels and the quantities of water recharged to and extracted from the underlying sub-basins. e. Sharing water resources data between the agencies to allow for responsible decisions regarding water supply development and land use planning. f. Developing policies regarding the provision of service to community water systems and small local water systems. <p>Upon completion of the Hollister Urban Water and Wastewater Master Plan the City will reassess the population, employment and other growth projections of the General Plan to be consistent with the adopted Urban Water and Wastewater Master Plan and in compliance with State law requirements for future water supplies.</p>	
<p>4.10-2 Water Supply</p> <p>Development under the Draft General Plan would increase the demand for water in the Planning Area. Growth projections for Hollister are consistent with adopted AMBAG forecasts except for a minor technical adjustment (see mitigation measure 4.1-1-1). Implementation of Draft General Plan policies and programs related to water supply, with the additional mitigation measure proposed in</p>	S	<p><i>Mitigation Measure 4.10-1-1 (modifications to Program CSF.F) also applies to this impact</i></p>	LTS

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR	Significance After Mitigation
this EIR requiring master planning for wastewater and water supplies in coordination with the San Benito County Water District and San Benito (see mitigation measure 10.2-1-1), would reduce this potentially significant impact to a less-than-significant level.			
4.10-3 Water Quality Standards Development under the Draft General Plan would result in an increase in the loading of petrochemical contaminants, heavy metals and pesticide, and herbicide residues to natural and artificial drainage-ways and could contribute to groundwater quality degradation and/or contamination within the Planning Area. Implementation of Draft General Plan policies and programs related to water quality, with the additional mitigation measure proposed in this EIR requiring master planning for wastewater and water supplies in coordination with the San Benito County Water District and San Benito (see mitigation measure 10.2-1-1), would reduce this potentially significant impact to a less-than-significant level.	S	Mitigation Measure 4.10-1-1 (modifications to Program CSF.F) also applies to this impact	LTS
4.10-4 Groundwater Development consistent with the Draft General Plan could result in overall incremental increases in impervious surface cover in some Planning Area watersheds. These increases would be minimal and would not affect groundwater resources. Use of groundwater for future water supply will have a significant effect on groundwater resources. Implementation of Draft General Plan policies and programs related to groundwater and future water supply and treatment, with the additional mitigation measure proposed in	S	Mitigation Measure 4.10-1-1 (modifications to Program CSF.F) also applies to this impact	LTS

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR	Significance After Mitigation
this EIR requiring master planning for wastewater and water supplies in coordination with the San Benito County Water District and San Benito (see mitigation measure 10.2-1-1), would reduce this potentially significant impact to a less-than-significant level.			
4.10-5 Erosion and Siltation Development consistent with the Draft General Plan would result in infill or redevelopment in already developed areas, and development in undeveloped areas, leading to incremental increases in project-induced erosion and sedimentation. The construction of commercial/industrial and residential projects could disrupt soil surfaces, alter local drainage patterns and potentially cause downstream siltation. Standard City practices and regulations, along with implementation of Draft General Plan policies and programs, would reduce potential impacts to a less-than-significant level.	LTS	None required.	LTS
4.10-6 Flooding and/or Stormwater Drainage System Capacities and Exposure of People and Structures to Flooding Incremental increases in development consistent with the <i>Draft General Plan 2020</i> would be concentrated in existing urbanized portions of the San Rafael watersheds, which would not be expected to result in quantifiable increases in peak flow rates. This would be a less-than-significant impact.	LTS	None required.	LTS
Agriculture			
4.11-1 Farmland Conversion Development consistent with the Draft General Plan would result in the irrevocable conversion of Prime Farmland to urban development. While the Draft General Plan proposes a significantly reduced area of	SU	None.	SU

<i>Impact</i>	<i>Significance Before Mitigation</i>	<i>Additional Mitigation Measures Contained in the EIR</i>	<i>Significance After Mitigation</i>
development of farmland as compared to 1995 General Plan, this would still be a significant unavoidable impact.			

2.3

Evaluation of Project Alternatives

The EIR examines three alternatives to the project as presently proposed. The alternatives have been developed to the extent that the level of impact relative to the proposed plan can be described. The range of alternatives considered are labeled as follows: (1) No Project/No Development; (2) No Project/No Action/1995 General Plan; and, (3) a Reduced Development alternative. The alternatives are examined in more detail in section 6 of the EIR. They are briefly described below.

- **Alternative 1 – No Project / No Development.** This alternative would reflect the existing conditions with no additional development within the City of Hollister Planning Area and current conditions in the City of Hollister Planning Area would remain. The environmental impacts are described by the existing conditions as reflected by the Draft City of Hollister General Plan, dated March 2005. This alternative reflects the least amount of development of the alternatives analyzed.
- **Alternative 2 – No Project / No Action / 1995 General Plan.** Alternative 2 (No Project/No Action/1995 General Plan) assumes that no General Plan is adopted for the City, and future development would continue to be guided by the existing General Plan, adopted in 1995, and zoning. This alternative reflects growth under existing General Plan policies, assuming feasible infrastructure improvements and community services. The existing land use concept designates large tracts of land for single family and rural residential development with the expectation that only a portion of these areas would develop during the planning period. There is more land area designated to accommodate anticipated residential development through the year 2010 than demand will justify.
- **Alternative 3 – Reduced Development.** The Alternative 3 (Reduced Development) land use concept shows the potential impact of lower-density development in Hollister with a reduced planning area boundary. The general organization of land uses is the same as the preferred land use concept, but the intensity of residential and commercial uses is reduced. The concept supports a smaller build-out population and places

less of a burden on infrastructure (recreational systems, street networks, water and sewer treatment) than the preferred land use concept, though the developable areas are similar.

On the basis of the discussion of the proposed project and the three alternatives, the EIR finds that Alternative 1 (*No Project / No Development*) would be the environmentally superior alternative because it would avoid most of the environmental impacts associated with increased development. The *Guidelines* also state that, if the environmentally superior alternative is the No Project Alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives. Based on a comparison of the of the significant environmental impacts of all the development alternatives in this exhibit, Alternative 3 (Reduced Development) and the Draft General Plan would result in a similar number of significant unavoidable adverse impacts and less-than-significant impacts.

The proposed project (Draft General Plan) actually results in one fewer significant unavoidable adverse impacts than the Reduced Development alternative and therefore would be the environmentally superior alternative (see Table 6.5.A: Comparison of Alternatives in Section 6). Despite many impacts of the Reduced Development Alternative being similar to the Draft General Plan, it is significant that the potential for housing development, since it is less under the Reduced Development Alternative, would make it less likely that the City could meet its regional housing needs, especially for lower income housing

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Section 3

Project Description

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3. Project Description

This chapter of the EIR describes the location of the Draft General Plan project (the proposed project), discusses the project purpose and objectives and summarizes the project technical economic, and environmental characteristics, including the population, employment, and housing projections.

3.1

Project Location

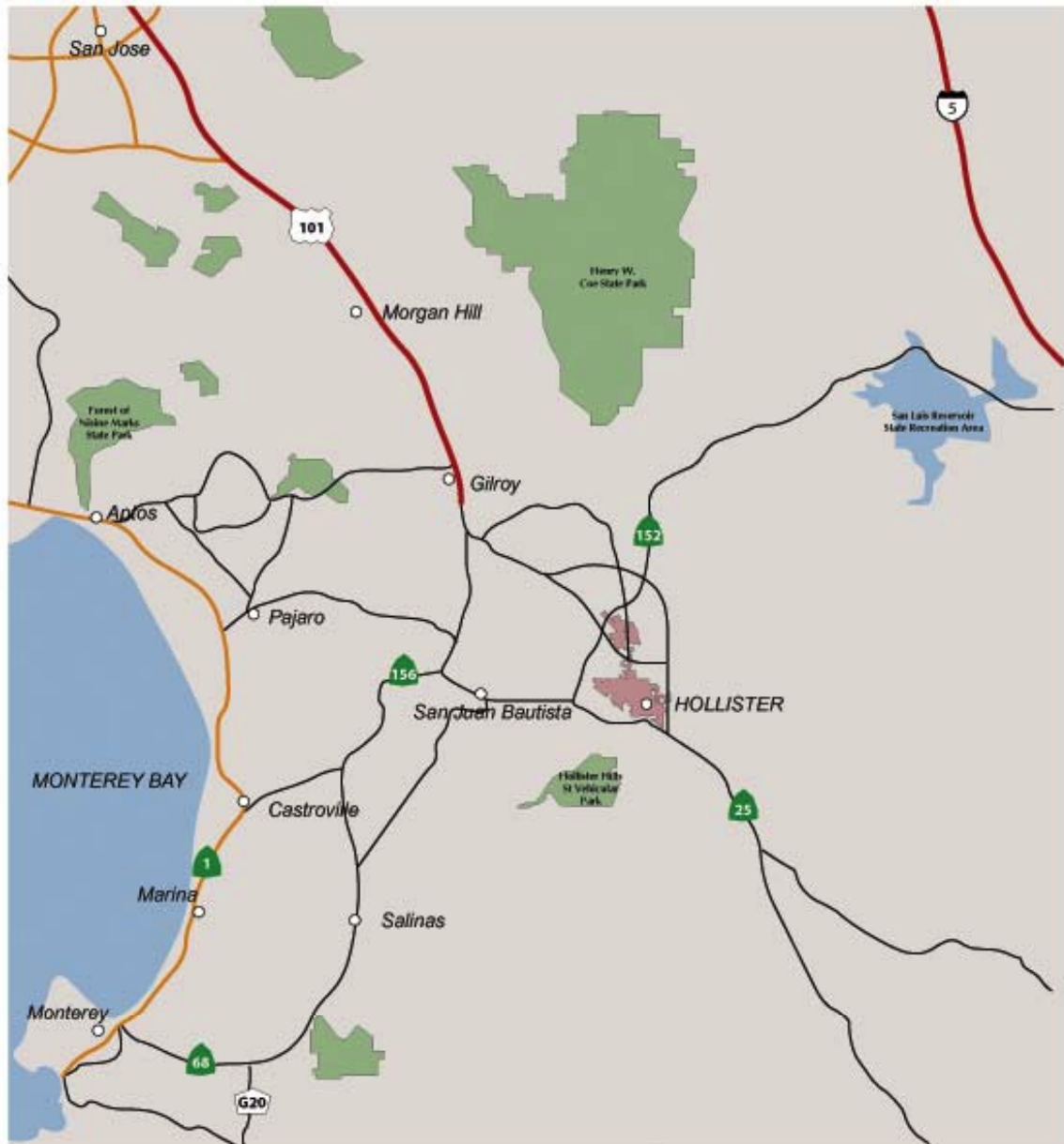
The City of Hollister is the largest city in San Benito County, with about 65% of the county population (January, 2005 population estimate by the California Department of Finance of 37,183 people residing in Hollister and a total of 57,602 people residing in San Benito County as a whole). San Benito County is situated in the Central Coast region of California, about 100 miles southeast of San Francisco, 40 miles east of Monterey and 300 miles north of Los Angeles (see Figure 1).

The Hollister Planning Area is located in the northern portion of San Benito County (see Figure 2). It encompasses all incorporated and unincorporated territory that bears a close planning relationship to the City of Hollister. Reduced in size from the 1995 General Plan, the Hollister planning area is generally bounded by Shore Road (north), Santa Ana Creek and parcels east of Fairview Road (east), Bolsa Road and the San Benito River (west), and Cienega Road (south).

Two state highways pass through the planning area: Highway 25, which begins at Highway 101 in Santa Clara County in the north, passes through downtown Hollister and ends near King City in the south; and Highway 156, which enters the Planning Area north of the Hollister Municipal Airport, passes through downtown Hollister and continues east toward San Juan Bautista. Although the Planning Area appears relatively flat, it gradually slopes upward from north to south. Major drainage features within the Planning Area include the San Benito River and Santa Ana Creek. Several major faults pass through the Planning Area, which has experienced several strong earthquakes in the past.

Within the Hollister Planning Area lie the Hollister Sphere of Influence (which encompasses all incorporated and unincorporated territory which is within Hollister's ultimate physical boundaries and service area, as adopted by the Local Area Formation Commission), the Hollister City limits (the area within the legal jurisdiction of the City of Hollister), the Hollister Urban Service Area (the area defined by the Local Area Formation Commission which is expected to receive urban services [sewer, water and storm drainage] within approximately the next five years), and the Hollister Residential Development Service Area (the area defined by the City of Hollister which is expected to have all urban services available or which have the provision of urban services [sewer, water and storm drainage] planned or committed to within one or two years).

Hollister's sphere of influence (SOI) encompasses the city's ultimate service area. The Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) determines the SOI boundaries for Hollister. As a function of this responsibility, Hollister city staff are able to review certain development proposals submitted to San Benito County for parcels in unincorporated areas for consistency with land use policies outlined in the city's General Plan.

Figure 1: Regional Location

The Hollister city limits encompass the incorporated territory that the city serves and regulates. The use of land within the city limits is controlled by the City of Hollister through its General Plan, zoning code, land subdivision process and other related regulations. Although the City of Hollister has an interest in the character and timing of development within the boundaries identified above, it has legal jurisdiction only over those areas within the city limits.

Figure 2: Planning Area Boundaries

3.2

Project Objectives

The General Plan contains a set of public policies that will guide future development and the maintenance of the physical environment. All cities in California are required to prepare and adopt a general plan. The California Government Code defines specific purposes and content requirements for general plans. At the same time, the City of Hollister General Plan is intended to do much more than merely meet legal requirements. It is intended to be a statement and vision of how the citizens of Hollister view their community, now and in the future, and, most importantly, how they intend to deal with the planning and development issues facing the community.

The project is a comprehensive update of the City's current General Plan. The updated General Plan provides goals, policies and implementation measures intended to guide development within the Hollister Planning Area through the year 2023. The City of Hollister's current General Plan was adopted in 1995. In 2002 the City determined that a comprehensive update of the General Plan was needed to address changed conditions since adoption of the 1995 General Plan to maintain a plan current in policy, program implementation, and budget direction.

As Hollister continues to grow, development pressure on the edges of the city will increase. Without a strategy to counterbalance this pressure, development will creep further from the core of Hollister. To promote concurrent development, policies are proposed to actively encourage infill development for the next five years. As a first step, the city will attempt to annex any county "islands" that are within the city limits, making these sites "ripe" for development. Once this has occurred, sites that are within the SOI will be encouraged to develop before development extends to the surrounding areas.

The Infill Strategy diagram in the Draft General Plan highlights priority residential development areas (see Figure 3). It also shows areas that are challenging to develop due to site constraints. Any residential development applications for sites in these Constrained Development areas will be delayed unless the applicant and surrounding property owners prepare an infrastructure plan to support their development proposal. The preparation of an infrastructure plan would allow development to occur on these sites, but if the applicant prepares a Specific Plan for the area the application will be further prioritized.

The Phasing Strategy Diagram highlights areas outside of the city's SOI that should not be developed until the SOI is sufficiently built out. Once this occurs, each development phase will be prioritized in sequence; applications for projects in the Phase 1 district will be promoted in favor of projects in Phases 2 or 3. Again, the preparation of a Specific Plan that offers Hollister a high-quality product or a unique opportunity is an alternative way for a development project to gain priority.

Despite identifying priority areas for development and implements a phasing strategy, the city cannot force development to occur in these places. In order to implement the phasing plan, Hollister will offer incentives that make infill development and phased growth the easiest, fastest, and most desirable places for developers to build new residential units.

Figure 3: Priority Infill Areas



The General Plan's includes new land use categories, such as Mixed-Use and Home Office, to allow a range of commercial projects to develop throughout Hollister without mandating specific uses. The Proposed Land Use Plan is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Proposed Land Use Plan



In addition to this flexibility, the General Plan identifies prime locations for new development to occur. By distributing different types of retail development opportunities throughout Hollister, the General Plan seeks to promote accessible and diverse retail districts that complement, rather than compete with, each other.

3.3

Description of the City of Hollister Draft General Plan

The Draft General Plan establishes land use designations within the Planning Area, and will provide the basis for subsequent revisions in the current zoning ordinance. The preferred land use concept was developed from community input gathered from community workshops and Steering Committee meetings. It recommends the concentration of medium and high-density residential development along major boulevards without developing the outskirts of the City. Gateway and neighborhood retail districts are designated at key points in the City, forming linear corridors of activity.

The planning area boundary is 42% smaller than the boundary shown in the existing General Plan; a reduction of 6,843 acres. Proposed land use designation changes include the creation of mixed use, home office, north gateway commercial and west gateway commercial uses; the concept increases medium density residential and high-density residential land use designations. The San Benito River is surrounded by park and open space land, creating a “greenway” recreation area for area residents. Below is a summary of the elements contained in the Draft General Plan.

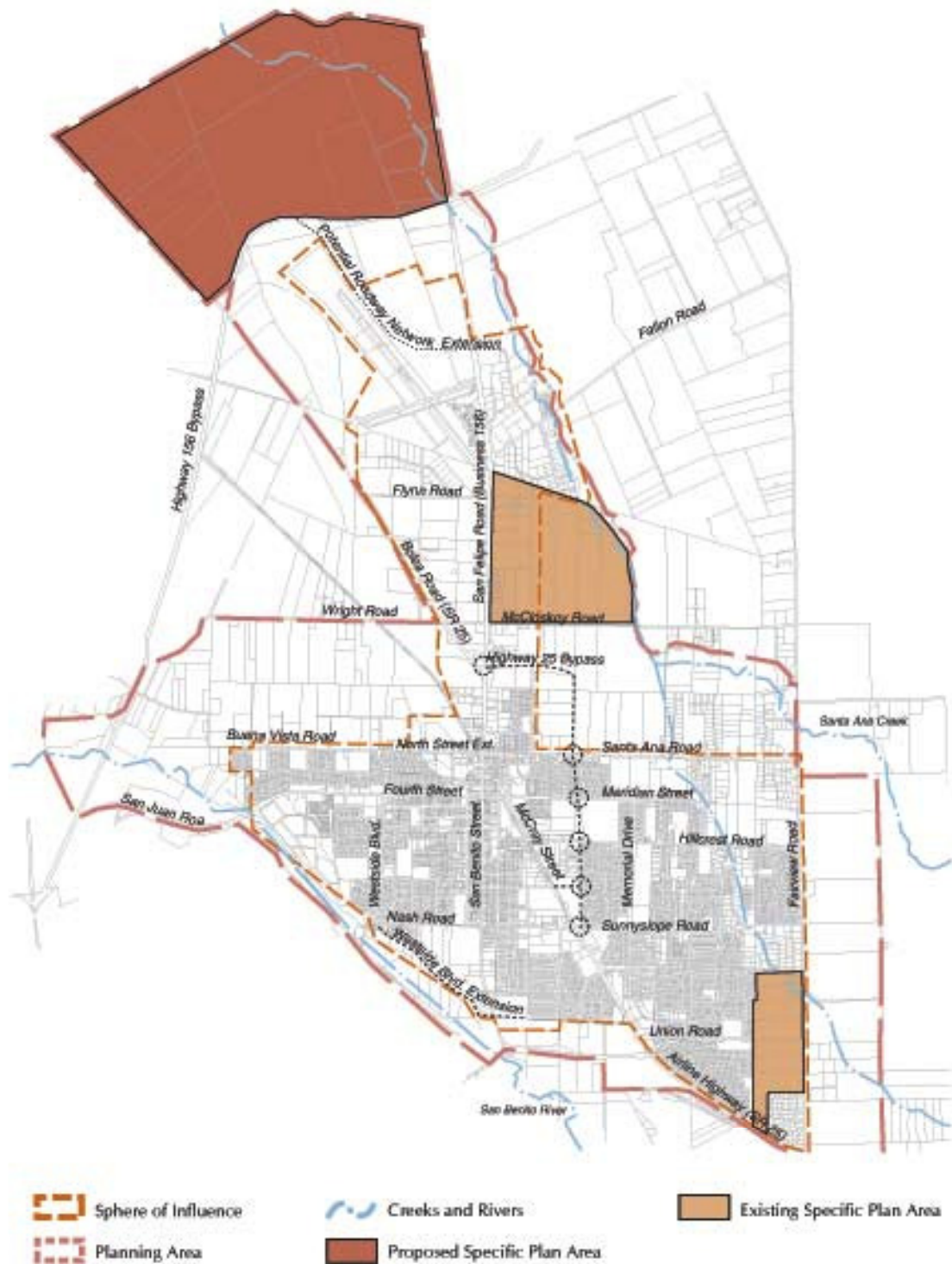
Land Use and Community Design Element: The Land Use and Community Design Element is extremely important because it provides the foundation for growth on which the other chapters are based; state law mandates the inclusion of a land use element in any General Plan. Land use goals and policies establish the overall type and location of development activity in Hollister and are closely related to housing and economic development. Though not required, the chapter also includes a community design element because the residents of Hollister place importance on improving the quality of development in the City.

Policies would continue to promote housing throughout the city, neighborhood retail centers, industrial areas, and regional shopping areas, and an urban Downtown. Updated Land Use policies would promote infill redevelopment on underutilized sites in commercial areas and near transit, while maintaining the historic neighborhood and non-residential land use patterns of the community. Mixed use would be allowed, in more areas of the city, as housing would be and added use in three commercial districts. The land use map (see Figure 4) and policies also show areas appropriate for providing housing units consistent with State law requirements.

In addition, areas requiring more specific planning are also identified (see Figure 5 for Specific Plan Areas). These are large tracts of land where the distribution of land uses, the location of community facilities, such as schools, parks and other facilities, as well as service needs for water, sewer, etc., should be planned in more detail. While the proposed General Plan provides over-arching policies and guidance and the general distribution of land uses, it is also a “programmatic” plan in the sense that it identifies specific studies or planning

activities to assure that future development occurs in a logical manner. This would include the availability of adequate infrastructure and services, methods to protect environmental resources, as well as the density, intensity and design of development.

Figure 5: Specific Plan Areas



Housing Element: All California cities and counties are required to have a housing element included in their General Plan which establishes housing objectives, policies and programs in response to community housing conditions and needs. This Housing Element has been prepared to respond to current and near-term future housing needs in Hollister. It contains updated information and strategic directions (policies and specific actions) that the City is committed to undertaking to address its housing needs. The Draft General Plan continues and even broadens the effort to provide a wide range of housing densities to allow a variety of housing types to meet the different needs of Hollister's population. Policies also continue to encourage below market rate housing, density bonuses for affordable housing, and community partnerships to assist in the development of affordable housing. Housing policies would also support public participation during project review and require new units to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Second dwelling units would continue to be encouraged, consistent with State law provisions.

Circulation Element. The Circulation Element would establish policies affecting the movement of people, goods and vehicles within and through the city. The central focus of the Circulation Element is on creating a more diversified, safe, cost-effective, and resource-efficient transportation network. The Circulation Element would also provide the framework for accommodating increased traffic from planned development in accordance with the Land Use Element.

The purpose of this element is to describe the quality of service currently provided within the greater Hollister area, and to report the projected change in the quality of service attributable to the land development concept proposed in the 2005 update of the Hollister General Plan. The following sections will:

- (1) Describe the existing transportation system,
- (2) Report useful information concerning how the system is used,
- (3) Quantitatively evaluate the quality of service provided by the roadway system,
- (4) Describe the previously planned roadway system improvements shown in the Circulation Element,
- (5) Report the projected increase in traffic attributable to the expected future population and employment growth,
- (6) Quantitatively evaluate the projected quality of service,
- (7) Identify projected roadway capacity deficiencies, and
- (8) Recommend improvements that will mitigate the projected level of service deficiencies back to insignificant levels.

Community Services and Facilities Element: The Community Services and Facilities Element would provide policies and programs for the planning, construction, management, and maintenance of public facilities provided by the City of Hollister, many in coordination with other entities related to drainage, parks and recreation, water and sewer systems, and other facilities. This Element identifies policies and programs to support coordinated planning in providing adequate services and facilities in Hollister, including partnerships with educational efforts, and collaborative efforts with community groups, using sound fiscal practices.

The element also identifies ways of maintaining and improving water quality that is essential to protect public health, wildlife, and watersheds, and to ensure opportunities for public

recreation and economic development in Hollister. In addition, ways to protect sensitive population groups (children, the elderly, the acutely ill, and the chronically ill) in the location of schools, retirement homes, convalescent homes, hospitals and medical clinics. Further, through education, participation in ongoing programs, and innovative strategies, the City seeks to provide clean air and water and, to the best of its ability, contribute to a healthy region.

Open Space and Agriculture Element: Preservation of open space and the natural environment have been a priority for Hollister residents for many years. The proposed Plan calls for, whenever possible, that the natural terrain and vegetation of the community be preserved and maintained. Recognizing the importance of agriculture to the community, the General Plan proposes to protect agricultural lands by maintaining parcels large enough to sustain agricultural production, preventing conversion to non-agricultural uses, and prohibiting uses that are incompatible with long-term agricultural production. A growing population is expected to place an increased demand on local open space resources, and as land that currently provides an open space function is converted to other uses, the amount of open space remaining within the Planning Area will be reduced. Preservation policies that protect open space features.

Surrounding Hollister are large tracts of agricultural land, some of which is classified by the California Department of Conservation (Division of Land Resource Protection) as "Prime Farmland" or "Farmland of Statewide Importance". A central concern of the General Plan, therefore, in considering the location, design, intensity and type of land uses in the City, is to continue to protect natural resource areas as development occurs and to concentrate development to minimize sprawl. It is also important to coordinate City land use policies with San Benito County General Plan policies that call for protection of the County's existing rural atmosphere, the encouragement of industry that is sensitive to and compatible with the environment and surrounding land uses, and the encouragement of building in areas where impacts are minimized and services and facilities can easily be provided.

Natural Resources and Conservation Element: Hollister is rich with diverse habitats, such as creeks and drainageways, that are valued resources for Hollister's wildlife. Protection, restoration or enhancement of damaged habitats is important for the continued health of Hollister's natural environment. The Plan proposes protection of the creeks and drainageways and wetlands, and the plants and animals that live in and near them, can be achieved by managing public access along these areas and by minimizing encroachment by new development to only that which is unavoidable. Other recommendations include preserving buffer areas along creeks and drainageways, associated riparian areas and wetlands.

Additional development could put increased pressure on existing wildlife habitat areas. Development proposed within the County-designated kit fox habitat area boundaries will be assessed an impact fee for every home or acre developed, under the terms of a Habitat Conservation Agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Plan also includes ways of reducing, reusing and recycling resources saves raw materials. Reduction refers to use of less of a resource material, such as the purchase of products with minimal packaging; reuse of a product involves the reapplication of a used product additional times before disposal, such as donating clothes to a charitable organization; recycling involves the reprocessing of the used product into the same or new product, such as reprocessing of used paper into newsprint.

This element includes opportunities for saving energy and utilizing mineral deposits appropriately. Conserving processes also save energy, since less energy is used than in the mining/harvesting, processing and transport of finished product. This is true of all resource types, from the commonly recycled items, such as glass, paper, aluminum, and tin, to fossil-fuel-based resources, such as plastics and automobile-related waste oils. Reduction of waste has been an issue in California due to the limited amount of land available for landfills. Residents, businesses and government should do all that is possible to reduce, reuse and recycle materials.

Health and Safety Element: The Health and Safety Element of the General Plan covers two of the seven State-mandated General Plan elements: Safety and Noise. The purpose of the Safety section is to identify and appraise hazards in the community in order to assure community safety. Information on Safety issues has been coordinated with the other elements of the City's General Plan, particularly Land Use, Open Space and Conservation. The extent of a hazard depends on local conditions, since most hazards are confined to a particular area or site. Various health and safety hazards should be considered in planning the location, design, intensity, density and type of land uses in a given area. Long-term costs to the City, such as maintenance, liability exposure and emergency services, are potentially greater where high hazards exist.

Noise issues are most closely associated with the Land Use and Circulation portions of the Hollister General Plan. Specific concerns addressed are: (1) establishment of noise compatible land uses; (2) regulation of new development to limit noise impacts on noise-sensitive uses; (3) minimization of traffic noise; (4) enforcement of noise standards to protect the existing quality of life; and (5) insulation of residences exposed to excessive levels of noise.

3.4

The Hollister General Plan Community Involvement Process

The City of Hollister's current General Plan was adopted in 1995. In 2002 the City determined that a comprehensive update of the General Plan was needed to address changed conditions since adoption of the 1995 General Plan to maintain a plan current in policy, program implementation, and budget direction.

The City established a General Plan Steering Committee comprised of nine community members to guide the work on the update and to create a plan that most accurately reflects current preferences and desires of the community. The Draft General Plan prepared by the Steering Committee will be subject to public hearings and adoption by the City of Hollister Planning Commission and City Council.

Over the past year the General Plan Steering Committee has met monthly to review background material, hear public testimony and provide policy direction for the Draft Plan. Representatives from various educational institutions, public utilities, and government agencies were invited to attend meetings and review policies. Community policies and programs through extensive media coverage provided by San Benito County's local

newspapers, The Pinnacle and the Free Lance, and through local access programming provided by Charter Communications Cable.

In addition, the City conducted a Vision Workshop in April 2003 and a Community Workshop in June of 2003 designed to articulate a future vision of Hollister and to identify important planning issues and preferred land use alternatives and strategies